



# FEMA

## Mitigation Efforts "Shut Out" Katrina

**Gulfport, MS** – On August 29, 2005, with Hurricane Katrina's devastating winds blowing outside, emergency personnel at the Harrison County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) were safe and secure thanks to storm shutters protecting the building's windows. More than 200 city, state, and county emergency officials, Mississippi National Guardsmen, Navy Seabees, and rescue workers took shelter and conducted 24-hour operations in the EOC in Gulfport. Located less than half a mile from the Gulf of Mexico, the building lies in an area that took a direct hit from the storm. Wind speeds in the area were reported to have been stronger than 130 miles per hour and the storm surge as high as 24 feet.

"If we hadn't installed the storm shutters, flying debris would have burst through the glass windows and doors on the front of the building," said Richard Faul, operations technician at the EOC. "Trees were down. Power lines were down. Some of the surrounding houses suffered structural damage and we lost a couple of satellite dishes off of the roof." "The fire station right across the street is gone," said General Spraggins, Director of the EOC, as he described the devastation in the area. "I looked out over to the west of the building and the casino there was completely destroyed. It was horrible. We could hardly get from one place to another because the roads were so torn up."

The First Judicial Court House that houses the EOC was built in 1977. Originally constructed as a civil defense facility, concrete was used for the building's frame, roof, and exterior walls, and it was built to withstand high wind events. The facility's first floor sits at an elevation of just over 26 feet.

"The building being elevated saved us as well," noted General Spraggins. "The water from the Gulf came all the way up to the building. If the first floor hadn't been elevated, we would have been under water like everyone else. As it was, we had water blow under the doors, but that was to be expected under the circumstances."

The EOC was retrofitted for metal storm shutters in 2003, after an assessment revealed that high winds could blow out the glass windows and doors of the facility. The total cost of the shutters was \$256,303. FEMA mitigation grant funds provided \$192,227 of the cost of the project.

The storm shutters were deemed a success. The EOC had the resources to deploy personnel immediately after the disaster, and courthouse documents dating to the 1840s, archived in the building, were saved.



Harrison County,  
Mississippi



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Public**

Cost:

**\$256,303.00 (Actual)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Retrofitting, Non-structural**

Primary Funding:

**Other FEMA funds/ US Department of  
Homeland Security**